

Iowa Child Advocacy Board



Attachment Vitamins: Interactive Course on Early Childhood Development, Attachment, Stress, and Trauma for CASA Advocates

*Independent Study Series
2-hour Training Credit*

Participant Instructions

Source:



The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), established by Congress in 2000, brings a singular and comprehensive focus to childhood trauma. NCTSN's collaboration of frontline providers, researchers, and families is committed to raising the standard of care while increasing access to services. Combining knowledge of child development, expertise in the full range of child traumatic experiences, and dedication to evidence-based practices, the NCTSN changes the course of children's lives by changing the course of their care. The website has extensive trauma related information and resources. <http://www.nctsn.org/>



THE LEARNING CENTER

As part of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), the Learning Center for Child and Adolescent Trauma offers Free Online Education.

Please use the link to create an online learning account if you do not already have a learning account: <https://learn.nctsn.org/>

After creating your account, please write your username and password here for reference to complete future trainings.

Profile Username: _____

Password: _____



After completing your account, please login and click on the training course: **Attachment Vitamins: Interactive Course on Early Childhood Attachment, Stress, and Trauma**

The following link will take you directly to the course:
<https://learn.nctsn.org/course/view.php?id=483§ion=0>



You can also find this course by using the "search" function at the top right of the webpage or click on the "Clinical Training" tab at the top and scroll down until you find the titled course. If you experience difficulties with the lessons, try accessing the course through an Internet Explorer browser.

Course Information

The Attachment Vitamins online course is an interactive, self-paced e-learning course for those adults who often find themselves in the company of children aged zero to five and their families, including professionals such as early childhood educators and child care providers, public health workers, nurses and other medical providers, case managers; and Advocates, and also, for the caregivers of young children themselves.

Co-created by Dr. Alicia Lieberman, author of *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*, and world-renown experts in the areas of parent-child attachment, child development, and trauma, Attachment Vitamins provides a clear and elegant overview of early social-emotional development with insights and suggestions to support healthy and mutually-satisfying child-caregiver relationships.

During the course's lessons, participants will learn about early childhood social-emotional development; the impact of stress and trauma; reflect on the possible meanings of children's behaviors; explore the influence of culture on families' socialization goals; and become familiar with a number of strategies aimed to promote secure attachment and safe socialization practices.



Begin by clicking on the *Curriculum* tab. Next, click on the title of each lesson to start the course. Following completion of the entire course participants will completion a short evaluation. This will allow for the Certificate of Completion to be downloaded.

Lesson 1: Understanding the Child's Context: (25 minutes)

Learning Objectives: Participants will:

1. Understand how a child's development is shaped by their environment
2. Differentiate between risk factors and protective factors
3. Describe how to increase resiliency in at-risk families
4. Understand how traumatic stress impacts development

Lesson 2: The importance of the Child-Parent Relationship: (25 minutes)

Learning Objectives: Participants will:

1. Define attachment
2. Understand how parents act as a secure base and safe haven for their children
3. Discuss the importance of a child's internal working model of attachment
4. Identify the four attachment patterns

Lesson 3: Temperament and Its Relation to Parenting Style: (20 minutes)

Learning Objectives: Participants will:

1. Understand the relationship between temperament and attachment in the parent/child relationship
2. Identify the nine dimensions of temperament
3. Define the three types of temperament in children
4. Discuss the goodness of fit between a child's and parent's temperament

Lesson 4: Developmental Milestones and Normative Fears:(25 minutes)

Learning Objectives: Participants will:

1. Identify the early milestones of early childhood
2. Discuss the development of self-awareness in early childhood
3. Define the four normative fears of early childhood
4. Consider ways the you can support both the parent and the child in coping with the normative fears of development

Lesson 5: The Effects of Toxic Stress and Trauma: (20 minutes)

Learning Objectives: Participants will:

1. Define traumatic stress
2. Understand how traumatic stress effects children's early development
3. Define trauma reminders
4. Describe how trauma impacts the parent/child relationship

Completion of the Course

At the end of each online lesson are Reflective Questions to help guide the application to your specific role. The goal of the questions is to bridge the gap between the content of the course and your individual work as a CASA. You will find these questions at the end of this packet for you to complete and share with your Local Coordinator to discuss how you can apply this course to your case



Lesson Reminders:

Attachment Vitamins: Understanding the Child's Context



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What you can do for families:

1. Always consider the child's context
2. Help the family reduce risk factors and increase protective factors
3. Reduce toxic stress through helpful interventions
4. Support the child-parent relationship
5. Promote coping skills in parents and children

What you can do for yourself:

1. Cultivate habits or activities that you find enjoyable to balance work-related stress
2. Protect your private life
3. Have boundaries between work life and home life
4. Build informal support systems with colleagues
5. Seek out supervision or consultation

Attachment Vitamins: The Importance of the Child-Parent Relationship



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Remember that children develop within the context of their close relationships!
2. Help caregivers recognize that they serve as both a secure base for their children's exploration of the world and as a safe haven where they can return for comfort and safety when stressed.
3. Children learn by direct exploration, which is why it is so important for healthy development! It can be helpful to think about children's "zone" of felt safety for exploring the world in developmental terms. In early infancy this "zone" of space may be small- just a few yards away and within the caregiver's reach, but it gradually expands as the child gets older.
4. Even when caregivers did not grow up having a secure attachment relationship with their own caregivers, your professional relationship with them may provide the reparative experience of providing security, perhaps for the first time. Practitioners should strive to model the spirit of care for their clients that they wish to see their clients provide for their children. Humans use imitation as a form of learning. In our interactions with caregivers, it helps to keep in mind that there is a "parallel process" where how we relate to the parent is often mirrored in how the parent learns to relate to the child. We need to be the change that we would like to see.

Attachment Vitamins: Temperament and Its Relation to Parenting Style



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- Think about your own temperament! What challenges does it cause and what protections does it afford you?
- Help parents remember that there is often positive side to even their child's most challenging temperamental traits. For example, let's say a parent thinks their baby is "stubborn." A potential benefit could be that because they are persistent, they remain focused on their goal! This may help the child succeed later on in life in academic and vocational settings.
- Encourage caregivers to reflect on their own temperament, and the ways in which it is and is not a good fit with their child(ren).
- Even when adults and children don't have a good fit in temperament, you can support the caregiver in finding ways that the adult can accommodate to their child's needs and make it a "good fit" to help the child be successful!

Click on a button
for more information →



EXAMPLE



Here are some changes you could make for a "good fit" include:

- **Activity level** - slowing down or speeding up the pace of activities, according to the child's needs
- **Stimulation** - changing the activity, toy, or environment to better suit your child's needs (e.g. a quieter, simpler stimuli may provide a better fit a highly sensitive child, while more bustling, complex, bright, and interactive stimuli can be appropriate for those low in sensitivity)
- **Rhythmicity** - creating a consistent and predictable schedule
- **Approach/Withdrawal** - building in extra time at the beginning of activities for the child to acclimate to the space and people.
- **Adaptability** - preparing your child for changes with advanced notice (e.g. visiting a new school or day care one or more times before their first official day.

Attachment Vitamins: Developmental Milestones and Normative Fears



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- In dealing with separation anxiety – acknowledge the child’s feelings. Tell the child that the parent loves them and will return at the end of the day.
- Caregivers can support children as they struggle with the fear of losing parental love by reminding them that while caregivers can be mad, sad, or upset (because of something the child has done or because of something unrelated to the child), they will always love their child, no matter what.
- Knowing about the normative fear of body damage can help caregivers be supportive and patient with children during the time that this fear peaks. Caregivers can help children cope by reassuring the child that their nails and hair will grow back, that after an injury that their body will heal, and that they will not vanish down the bathtub drain along with the used bath water!
- Children’s normative developmental fear of being bad tends to emerge at the same time when children begin experiencing new emotions like guilt and shame, and they actually begin to worry that they are bad people when something goes wrong.
- Remember that while all four of the normative developmental fears have a typical age of onset and peak during childhood, they stay with us and can re-emerge in response to various stresses throughout the life span, and can become exacerbated by trauma.

NOTE: Advocates must proceed with caution in making any statements about the parent’s return to a child in the child welfare setting. The first bullet above would not apply in the Advocate’s role and is intended in a general way about children’s separation anxiety.

Attachment Vitamins: The Effects of Toxic Stress and Trauma



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- It is important to consider the effects of toxic stressors and trauma when working with families.
- Knowing a family’s trauma history can help you identify the meaning behind the child’s and parents’ behavior and help parents strengthen and/or repair their relationships with their children.
- Providers can increase their own sense of satisfaction with their work and become more helpful to children and families if they approach them with an attitude of interest in learning what happened to the child and the family rather than with the idea that there is “something wrong” with them. Emotional difficulties and challenging behavior often become understandable when we understand that they emerge as adaptive responses to adverse, stressful, or traumatic circumstances.
- If you are concerned about a parent, you might suggest that they find a supportive person to talk to about their stress. This can be a friend, family member, or a therapist.

Additional Resources



Remember, all resources are intended to be used to provide a framework for Advocates' observations and making recommendations. They are not intended to be used as evidence of a professional assessment regarding child development.

The Iowa Child Advocacy website provides links to additional resources you may find helpful. Click on the following links to learn more:

[Child and Adolescent Development Resource Book- Child Welfare Academy](#)

[Child Development Guide.pdf](#)

[Early Development Red Flags](#)

[A Quick Reference Guide Red Flags](#)



Or go to Forms and Resources: <https://childadvocacy.iowa.gov/forms-and-resources> and look for the child development related resources.



In Brief: The Science of Early Childhood Development 3-minute video
<https://youtu.be/WO-CB2nsgTA>

You can learn more from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University using the link below. Learn how five numbers illustrate the importance of early childhood to the learning, behavior, and health of later life and explain why getting things right the first time is easier and more effective than trying to fix them later.

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development/>

Developmental Milestones

The CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide numerous resources on developmental milestones. Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and waving “bye-bye” are called developmental milestones. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act, and move (crawling, walking, etc.).

Click on the age of your child to see the milestones.

- [2 months](#)
- [4 months](#)
- [6 months](#)
- [9 months](#)
- [1 year](#)
- [18 months](#)
- [2 years](#)
- [3 years](#)
- [4 years](#)
- [5 years](#)
- [Print the milestone checklists \(PDF\)](#)
- Download the [Milestone Tracker](#) mobile app
- [View the Milestones in Action photo and video library](#)

Additional information found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

Positive Parenting Tips

As a child grows and develops, there are many things you can do to help. Using the link below, you can find additional information and links to help you learn more about your child's development, positive parenting, safety, and health at each stage of a child's life.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html>

Please answer the Reflection Questions below and send this back along with your certificate to your Coordinator to receive your in-service credit.

Lesson 1: Understanding the Child's Context

1. What are the risk factors, including toxic stressors and/or traumas that the families CASAs serve often face?
2. How can CASAs help to advocate for protective factors to be built in the families served?
3. What additional resources are available for families in your community? Create a list of possible resources available to the families and/or questions you will explore with others to identify known resources.

Lesson 2: The importance of the Child-Parent Relationship:

1. How do you think your attachment history with your parents or caregivers affects who you are today? What are some ways that you can help advocate for increasing the security of the attachment relationships between the parent and children you work with, keeping in mind that different attachment patterns require different approaches?
2. What type of challenges might you face in this work, and how have others addressed these challenges?

3. Think about the families you serve: What are the considerations to keep in mind when working with families from diverse cultures?

Lesson 3: Temperament and Its Relation to Parenting Style:

1. What are some temperamental styles that you might challenging within a group setting? Think about strategies you can use to help manage difficult behaviors.
2. How might you be able to assist parents with challenging behaviors, particularly when there is poor goodness-of-fit between the styles of the parent and child?

Lesson 4: Developmental Milestones and Normative Fears

1. How can you sensitively provide information to parents within the scope of your advocacy role about normative development fears as they come up?
2. How has the information provided in the lesson changed the way you think about development and how will you bring this to your CASA work?

Lesson 5: The Effects of Toxic Stress and Trauma:

1. What toxic stressors and traumas are commonly faced by the families served by CASAs? How have providers and advocates worked to be sensitive to these issues? What would be important for you to be aware of?
2. How can you increase the likelihood of engagement with outside services when you believe they will help the family?

3. How might the experience of interpersonal trauma (such as maltreatment or witnessing domestic violence) affect the way the child sees the parent? Their view of other and the world?